United Nations S/AC.51/2011/5

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 July 2011

Original: English

Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic

1. At its 30th meeting, on 2 May 2011, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the second report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (S/2011/241), covering the period from December 2008 to December 2010, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group.

2. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, submitted in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), and responded favourably to the analysis and the recommendations contained therein.

3. They welcomed the steps taken by the Central African Republic to ensure the protection of children, in particular the signing of the N'Djamena Declaration to end the use of child soldiers, efforts made to ensure greater protection of civilians, the signing of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the collaboration with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).

4. However, the members of the Working Group expressed concern about the fact that children continued to be recruited and used by armed groups, including by self-defence militias.

5. They noted with grave concern that the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remained responsible for violations and abuses committed against children, including the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence and the abduction of children to serve as combatants, spies, sex slaves and porters.

6. They encouraged the Government of the Central African Republic to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, underlining in particular the urgent need for the Government to facilitate the completion by armed groups of time-bound action plans developed in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), and

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called on the Central African Republic to rigorously investigate and prosecute crimes committed against children and to translate the commitments made into national law.

7. The Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, briefed the Working Group on his recent visit to the Central African Republic and on the wider peacebuilding challenges in the country.

8. The Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic:

(a) Welcomed the second report of the Secretary-General and the positive developments in his country since the first report (S/2009/66);

(b) Reaffirmed the commitment of his Government to eradicate the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and listed the measures taken by his Government to enhance the protection of children in the Central African Republic, which included the signing of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the endorsement of the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles);

(c) Noted that the United Nations programme to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate children associated with the armed groups that had signed the peace agreement with the Government in 2008 had not been fully implemented due to a lack of resources;

(d) Underlined the contribution of the Peacebuilding Commission to the protection of children in the Central African Republic;

(e) Stressed that LRA continued to pose a significant security threat and expressed the hope that, with support from the international community, affected States would put an end to the threat constituted by this armed group;

(f) Expressed regret that children were present within the ranks of local self-defence militias despite a prohibition of the recruitment of children by the Central African Republic, noted that his Government should take the pending administrative steps to establish a national council for child protection, and called upon the United Nations to support the proper functioning of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the Central African Republic, as requested by the Security Council.

9. Further to the meeting and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), the Working Group agreed to the following direct action.

Public statements issued by the Chair of the Working Group

10. The Working Group agreed to address a message to all the parties to the armed conflict in the Central African Republic mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, through public statements by its Chair:

I. To all armed groups

(a) *Expressing deep concern* regarding the continuing violations and abuses committed against children in the Central African Republic, and urging them to

immediately implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic (S/AC.51/2009/2);

(b) *Strongly urging* them to immediately halt the recruitment and use of children, as well as violations and abuses against children, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), and to release all children still within their ranks;

(c) *Urging* them to develop as soon as possible time-bound action plans in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009);

(d) *Emphasizing* that the full implementation of an action plan in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), confirmed by the task force on monitoring and reporting, is an important step for a party to conflict to take in order to be de-listed from the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict;

To the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et de la démocratie

(e) *Welcoming* the separation of children from the ranks of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république de la démocratie (APRD) since June 2008, and calling on APRD to ensure the comprehensive and definitive release of all remaining children;

To the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice

(f) *Expressing deep concern* at the ongoing recruitment and use of children and other violations and abuses committed against children, and calling on the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice to immediately cease the continuing violations and abuses committed against children and to enter into a dialogue with the United Nations;

To the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix

(g) *Expressing deep concern* at the lack of humanitarian access to areas under the control of the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) in the north-eastern part of the country, as well as persistent reports of the recruitment and use of children and of violations and abuses against children in those areas, and urging CPJP to allow humanitarian actors to deliver assistance to the displaced and other populations in need;

(h) *Welcoming* the announcement of a ceasefire by CPJP, and encouraging CPJP to enter into a dialogue with the Government towards the signature of the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement;

To LRA (to be addressed through the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for LRA-affected areas)

(i) *Strongly condemning* the continued perpetration of violations and abuses committed against children, including the recruitment and use of children, rape and

other sexual violence, and abductions by LRA in the south-eastern and eastern parts of the Central African Republic;

II. To the Government of the Central African Republic

(j) *Expressing serious concern* at the recruitment and use of children by local self-defence militias, and calling on the Government to reiterate its prohibition of the recruitment and use of children, to work to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all children associated with these groups and to refuse any support for any militias that recruit and use children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

11. The Working Group agreed to recommend the following letters to the Security Council:

Letter to the Government of the Central African Republic

(a) *Welcoming* the steps taken by the Government to enhance the protection of children in the Central African Republic, in particular the signing of the N'Djamena Declaration to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups and of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and encouraging the Government to ratify the Optional Protocols and undertake the necessary reforms to translate their provisions into national law, including by taking feasible measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, such as the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices and by undertaking the reforms to national law necessary to bring domestic legislation in line with the obligations of the parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(b) *Commending* the efforts of the Government to address the threat of LRA in collaboration with States in the region, under the auspices of the African Union, and urging the Government and its partners to follow up on the steps agreed upon during the African Union ministerial meeting on LRA, held in Bangui on 13 and 14 October 2010, including the establishment of a joint operations centre, the conduct of joint patrols on the borders of LRA-affected countries and the deployment of troops to facilitate access to and protection of vulnerable communities;

(c) *Welcoming* the decision of the Government to create a national council for child protection, and encouraging the Government to ensure that the body is able to function as soon as possible and thus to actively help in the adoption of measures to end and prevent violations and abuses against children;

(d) *Also welcoming* the Government's ongoing efforts to build a protective environment and develop accountability for violence against children, and urging it to investigate rigorously and prosecute crimes committed against children;

(e) *Expressing deep concern* regarding the slow progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (S/AC.51/2009/2), including those pertaining to the development of concrete and time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use

of children in violation of applicable international law by the parties concerned, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), and urging the Government of the Central African Republic to facilitate, as appropriate, the preparation of such action plans;

(f) *Expressing serious concern* at the use of children by local self-defence militias, and calling on the Government to work to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all children associated with these groups, in particular through the immediate issuance of clear orders, including at the local level, and the refusal of any support for any militias that recruit and use children;

Letter to the Secretary-General

(g) *Noting* that the collaboration between the Government and the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) in support of the effort of the Forces armées centrafricaines to protect civilians and regain control over conflict-affected areas is an important step towards protecting children;

(h) *Underlining* the concomitant need for the international community to support the Government in its efforts to professionalize and strengthen its defence and security forces, including its oversight mechanisms;

(i) *Encouraging* further collaboration between MICOPAX, BINUCA and relevant child protection actors on the training and capacity-building of Central African law enforcement and armed forces personnel, in the context of a holistic, nationally driven approach to security sector reform;

(j) *Stressing* that a strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanism is necessary to ensure adequate follow-up to the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendation that sufficient resources and capacity be dedicated to the mechanism and the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009);

(k) *Requesting* the Secretary-General, through BINUCA and the United Nations country team, to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations and abuses against children through regular meetings of the Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting and to promote the strengthening of information networks, in order to ensure the fulfilment of reporting obligations to the Security Council;

(l) *Also requesting* the Secretary-General to urge the Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting to strengthen monitoring and reporting activities and to deploy resources and ensure sufficient capacity for this purpose, as necessary;

(m) *Noting* the release of children from the ranks of APRD, and the latter's attempts to conclude an action plan with the United Nations, and requesting that the United Nations country team renew its efforts to develop and implement an action plan with APRD to prevent the further recruitment and use of children with a view to de-listing APRD from the annexes to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict;

(n) *Calling upon* United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to support the Government in the development and implementation of long-term reintegration

programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, taking into account the Paris Principles, which have been endorsed by the Government of the Central African Republic, in order to ensure that the separation of children from armed groups is maintained in the Central African Republic;

(o) *Welcoming* the specific allocation of funds from the Peacebuilding Fund for child reintegration.

Direct action by the Working Group

12. The Working Group also agreed that the Chair should address letters as follows:

To the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

(a) *Welcoming* the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with the Central African Republic, in particular its support for the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups, and encouraging the Commission to remain committed to children in the Central African Republic, including with regard to the socio-economic reintegration of former child combatants and the building of national capacity to protect children;

To the World Bank and donors

(b) *Highlighting* the critical needs related to child protection in the Central African Republic, and calling on the donor community to provide sustained resources to support child protection programmes in the country;

(c) *Encouraging* donors to support the reintegration of children who have been released from armed groups, and stressing that psychosocial support and assistance to victims of gender-based violence, in particular victims of LRA, is required;

(d) *Appealing* to the donor community to support the functioning of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations and abuses committed against children in the Central African Republic, including through the funding of child protection capacity and training for partners;

(e) *Underlining* the need for the international community to support the Government in its efforts to professionalize and strengthen its defence and security forces, including its oversight mechanisms, and welcoming in this regard the collaboration between the Government and MICOPAX.